CHAPTER 23

HEY.
IT DIDN'T SHINE AS BRIGHTLY AS IT DOES NOW
UNTIL THE SWORD OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION JOINED THEIR RANKS.
THIS PLACE IS PRETTY COOL.

*LITERALLY DARK AND CRUEL DEMON

EVEN THE MOST FAMOUS BLADES SEEM LIKE SCRAP METAL.
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LEGENDARY SWORD OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION THAT SLEW THE DEMON GO, YO JYA REI*, DURING THE WAR OF THE FADING DUSK.

THE WORLD IS SHAPED BY THEIR ABSOLUTE TRUTH OF LIFE AND DEATH.

SWORDS ARE THE GREATEST SYMBOL OF STRENGTH IN THE WORLD.

WHY ARE YOU SO OBSESSED WITH SWORDS?

WHEN THE POWER TO DESTROY IS PLACE IN YOUR HAND, COMPARED TO HAPPINESS IT IS AS FLEETING AS FOAM ON THE SEA.

AND POWER.

WEALTH.

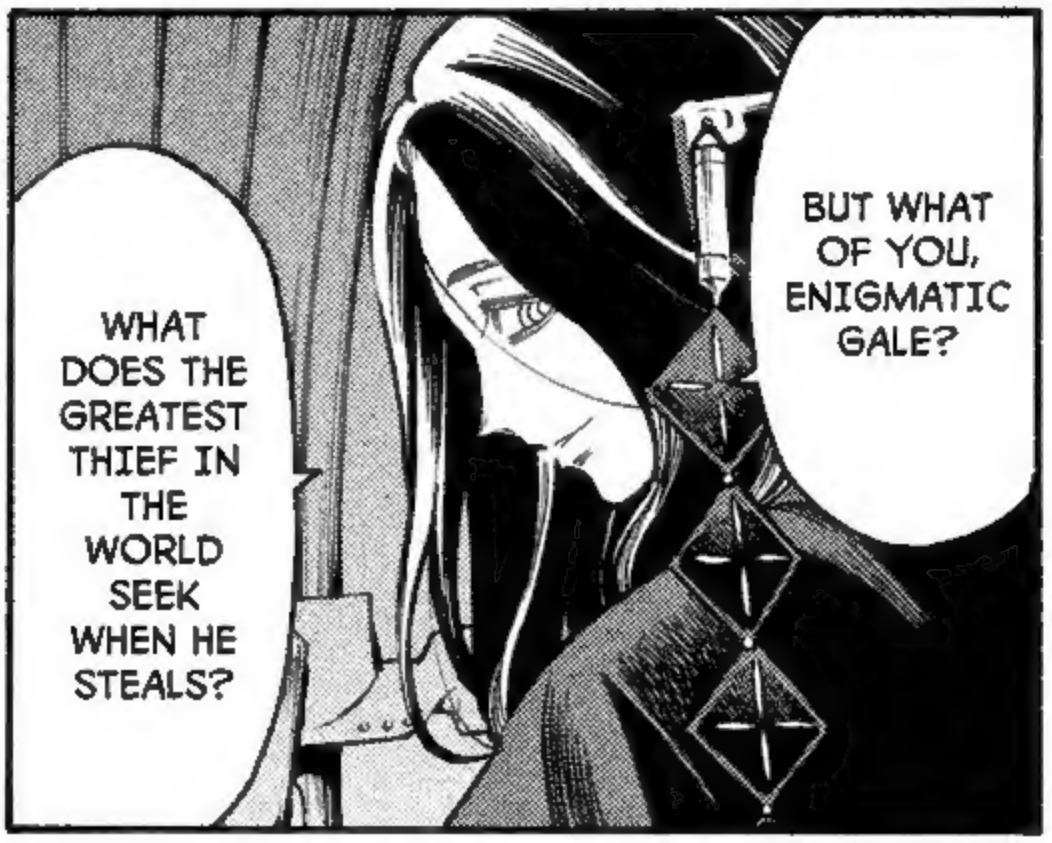
GLORY.

AREN'T YOU...

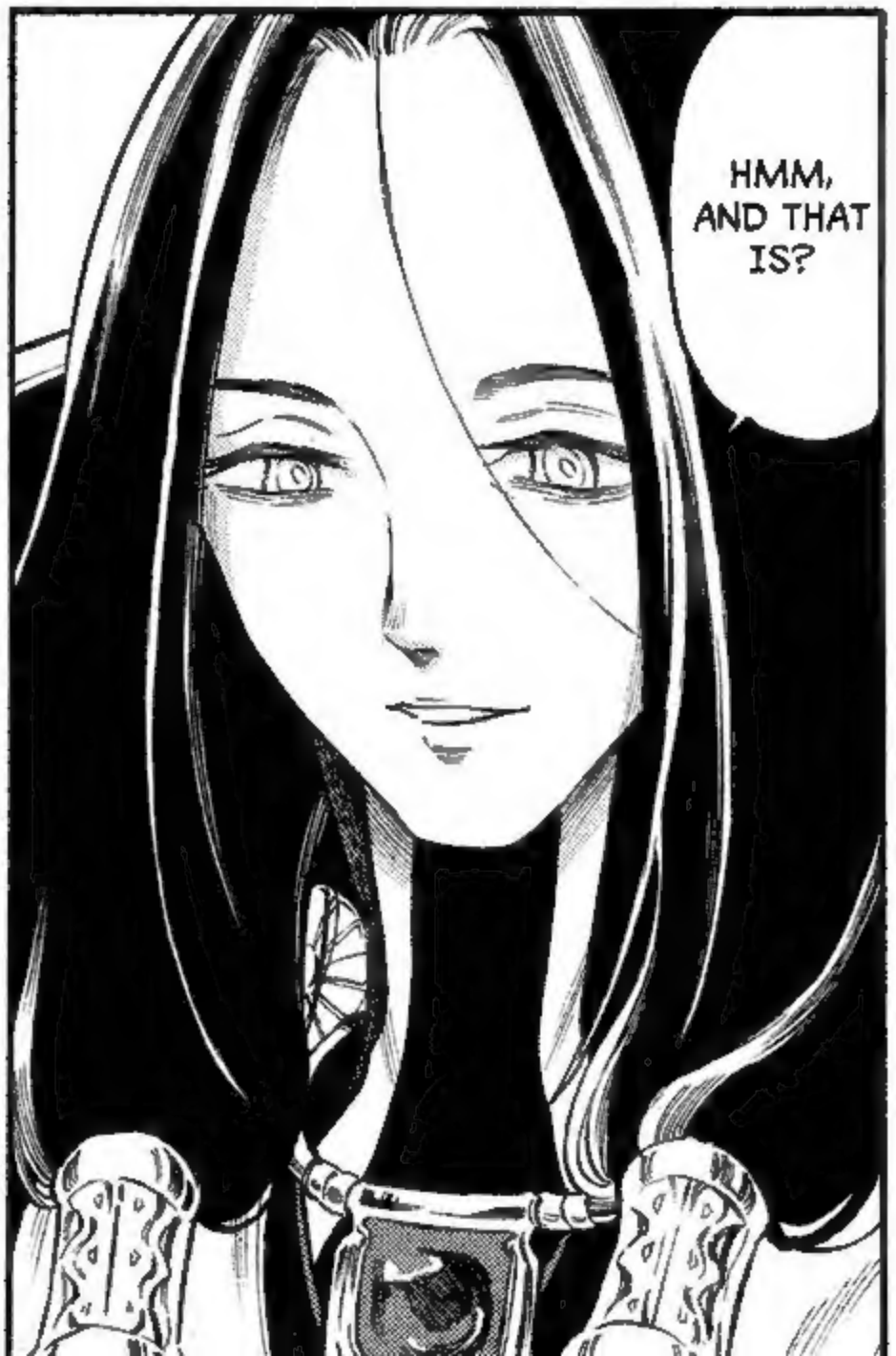
!

BETSU TEN GAI IS INSIDE TALKING TO THAT GUY...

NOTHING COMES TO MIND WHEN I THINK OF IT.
THOUGH, I SUPPOSE THERE ARE SOME THINGS IN THIS WORLD THAT YOU CAN ONLY GET BY STEALING.


BUT WHAT OF YOU, ENIGMATIC GALE?
WHAT DOES THE GREATEST THIEF IN THE WORLD SEEK WHEN HE STEALS?

...THE ETHOS OF A CHAM-PION.
THAT'S THE ONLY WORDS THAT FIT THE BILL.


HMM, AND THAT IS?

OH, I'VE GOT A BILL FOR YOU, RIN SETSU A.

DON'T YOU THINK?

OH, NO. IT'S THE ROARING PHOENIX EXECUTIONER.

IT'S PRETTY RUDE OF YOU TO BARGE IN HERE UNINVITED...

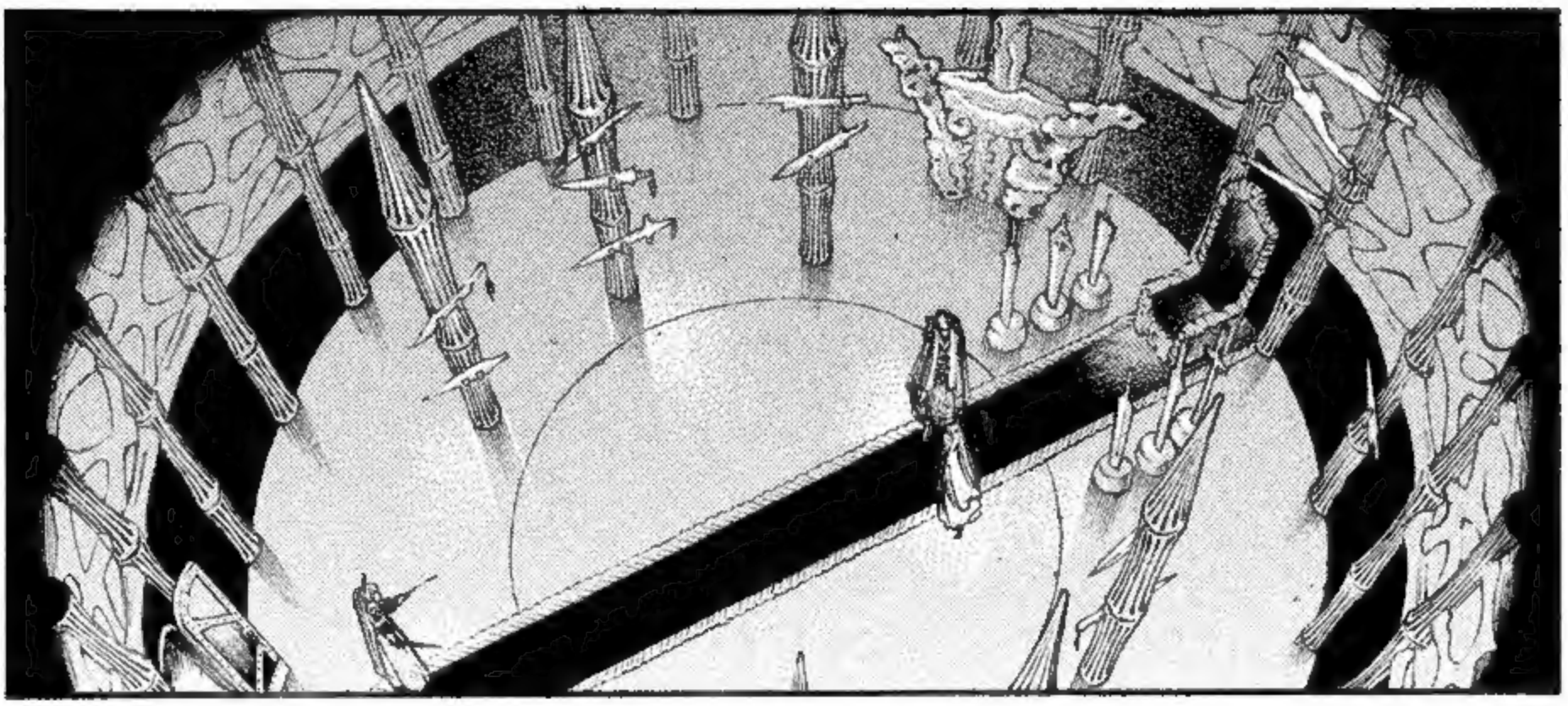
I'VE COME TO COLLECT THE HEAD THAT YOU PROMISED ME.

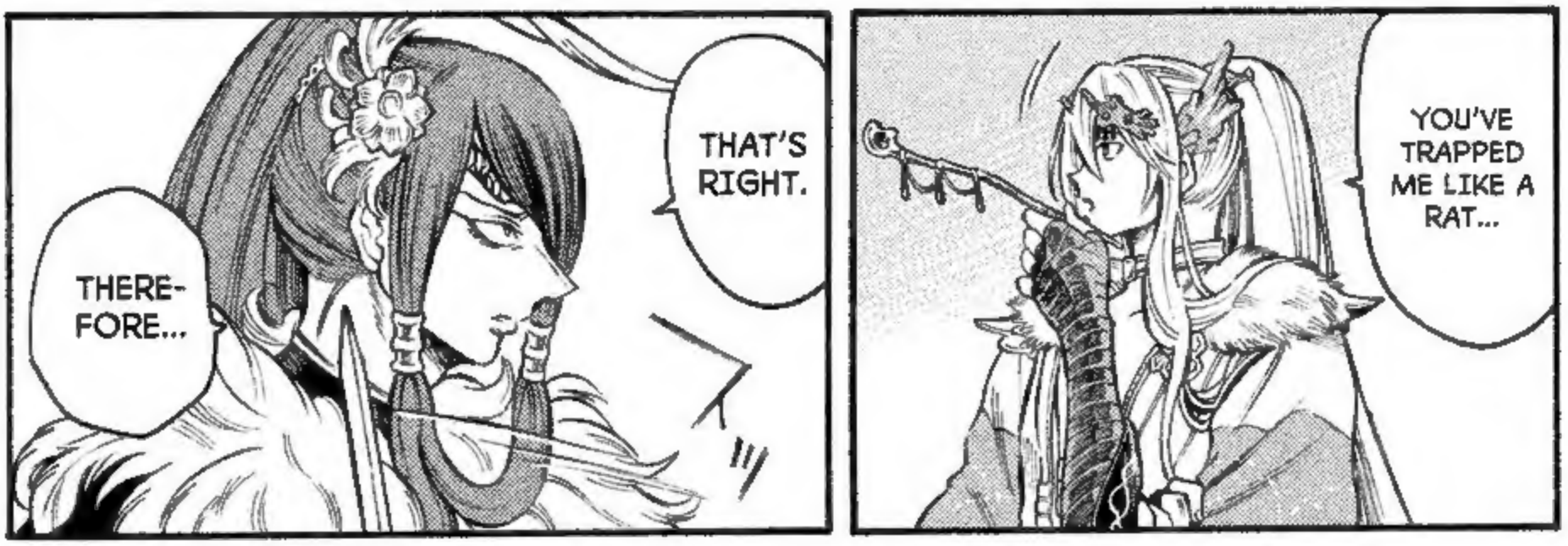
ALSO WASN'T I GOING TO GIVE IT TO YOU FOR GUIDING ME THROUGH THE LABYRINTH OF DARKNESS?

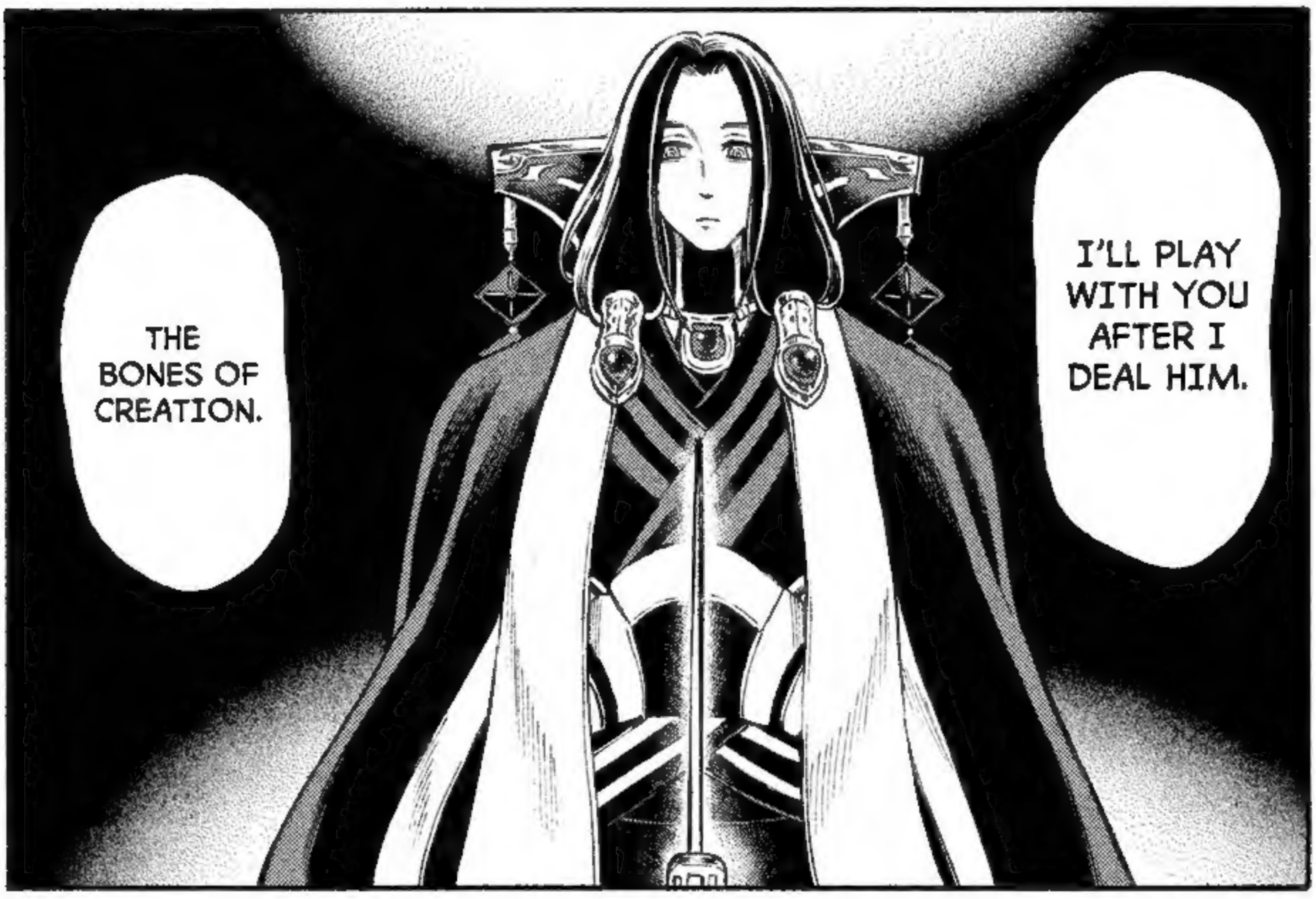
WHICH AS YOU CAN SEE, DIDN'T HAPPEN.

HEH...WHAT TRIVIAL NONSENSE.

NOT THAT IT MATTERS, JUDGING FROM THE SITUATION.




THERE-FORE...
THAT'S RIGHT.
YOU'VE TRAPPED ME LIKE A RAT...


THE BONES OF CREATION.
I'LL PLAY WITH YOU AFTER I DEAL HIM.

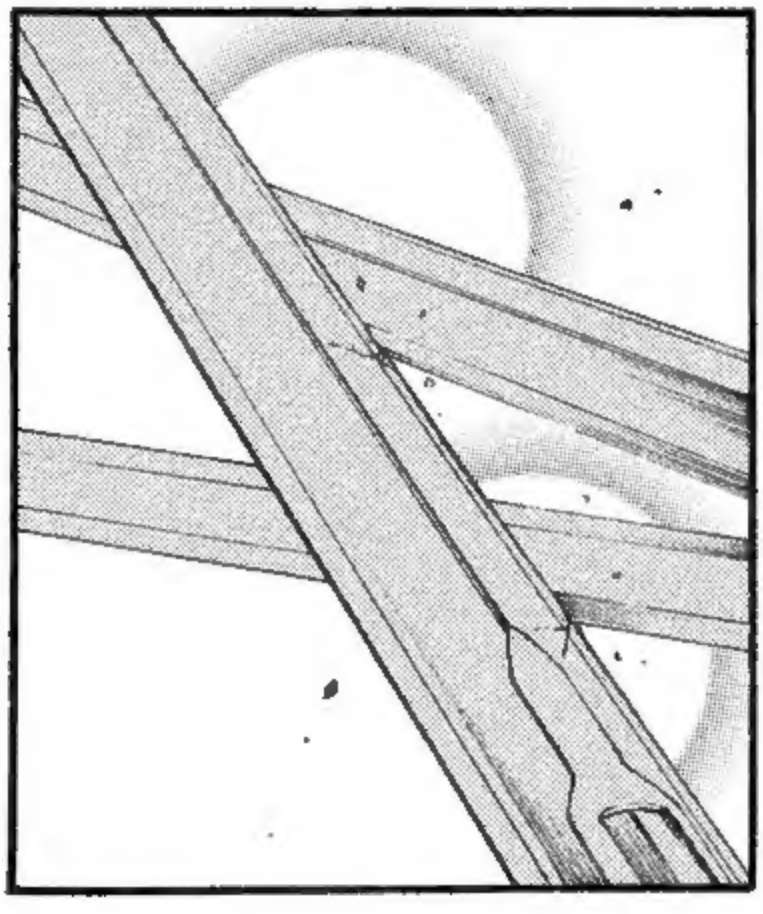
I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND ME INQUIR-ING ABOUT YOUR LIFE.

IT WAS ON THE RIVER-SIDE ...

NOT AT ALL.

BRING IT.

..... THANK YOU FOR THIS.



WELL.

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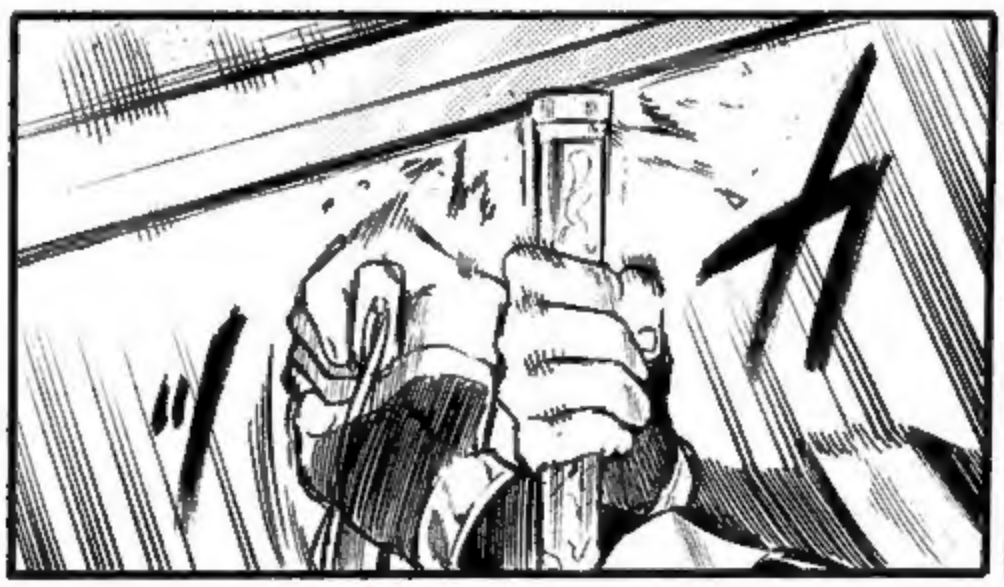
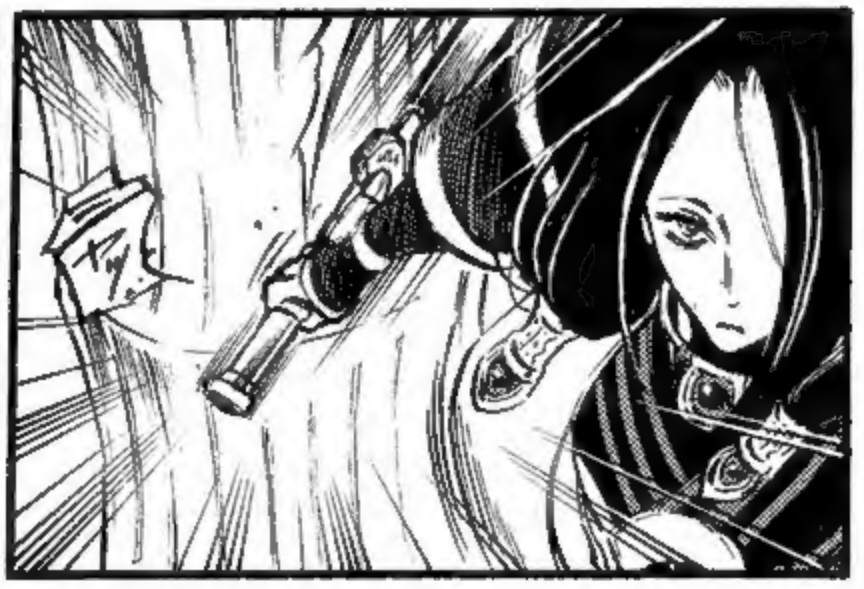




ROARING PHOENIX EXECUTIONER.

IS THIS ALL YOU CAN DO?

THIS IS IT ...

CHECK-MATE...

YOU CONTINUED TO FIGHT KNOWING FULL WELL THE OUTCOME.

WHY DID YOU CHALLENGE ME TO BEGIN WITH?

IF I KNOW I CAN'T WIN, I WON'T BE SATISFIED WITHOUT TASTING DEFEAT.

MY WAY OF THE SWORD HAS ALWAYS BEEN A QUEST OF INEVITABLY.

!!!

RIN SETSU A.

NEXT TIME WE MEET...

I WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU IN AMBUSH...

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN ...

YES.

ガシッ

SHOW HIM PROPER RESPECT.

CRE-MATE HIM.

DON'T FEED THE ROARING PHOENIX EXECU-TIONER TO THE DEMON BIRDS.

THE ANSWERS HE SOUGHT WERE ALWAYS BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH...

...THAT MAN HAD ALWAYS LONGED TO ENCOUNTER SOMEONE STRONGER THAN HIM.

THIS IS AN ORDER .....

I IMAGINE HE WAS PLEASED TO HAVE FALLEN HERE.

WITH SKILLS SUCH AS THOSE YOU CAN HAVE RISEN TO GLORY LEGITIMATELY, WITHOUT THE USE OF THE ONYX DEMONS.

HOWEVER...I HAD NEVER IMAGINED THAT YOU WERE A BETTER SWORDSMAN THAN THE ROARING PHOENIX EXECUTIONER.

HAVE YOU NO INTERESTED IN JOINING THE RANKS OF THE WULIN*?

THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ME AND THE ROARING PHOENIX EXECUTIONER.

WHAT IS A SWORD WITHOUT THE SECRETS IT HOLDS?

* MARTIAL ARTS (SOCIAL) CIRCLES

REGARDLESS IF OTHERS KNOW OF IT OR NOT.

MY SWORD IS UNMATCHED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD,

HMM...

.....

OKAY.

PLEASE, TAKE A REST IN HERE.

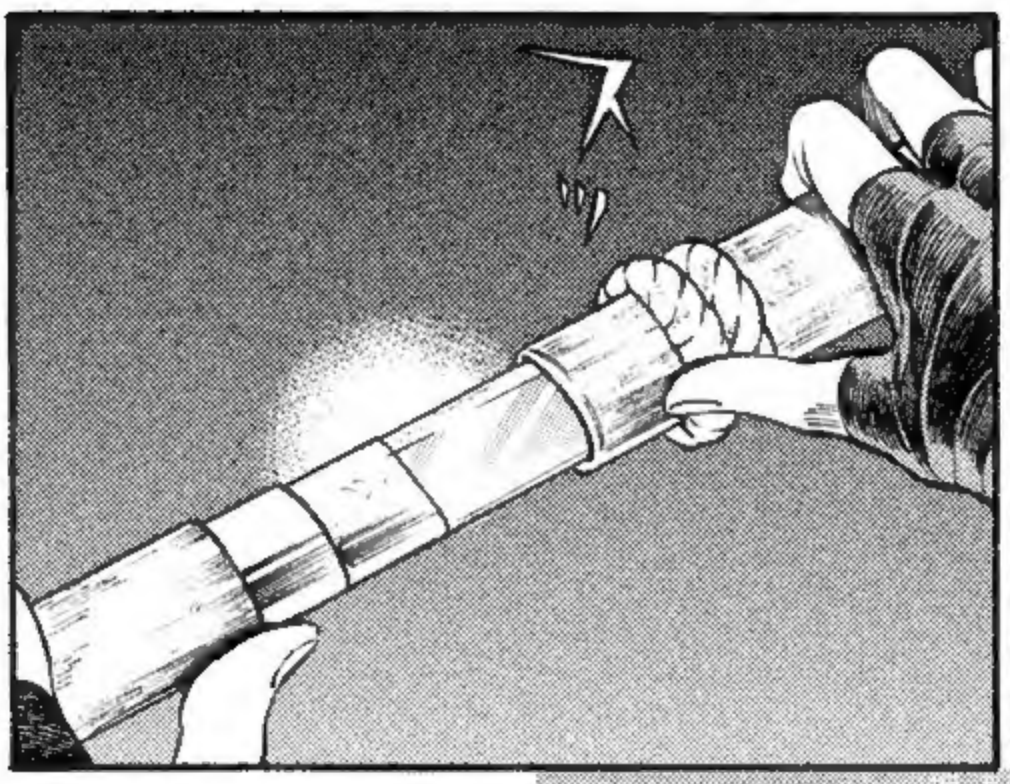
NOW.

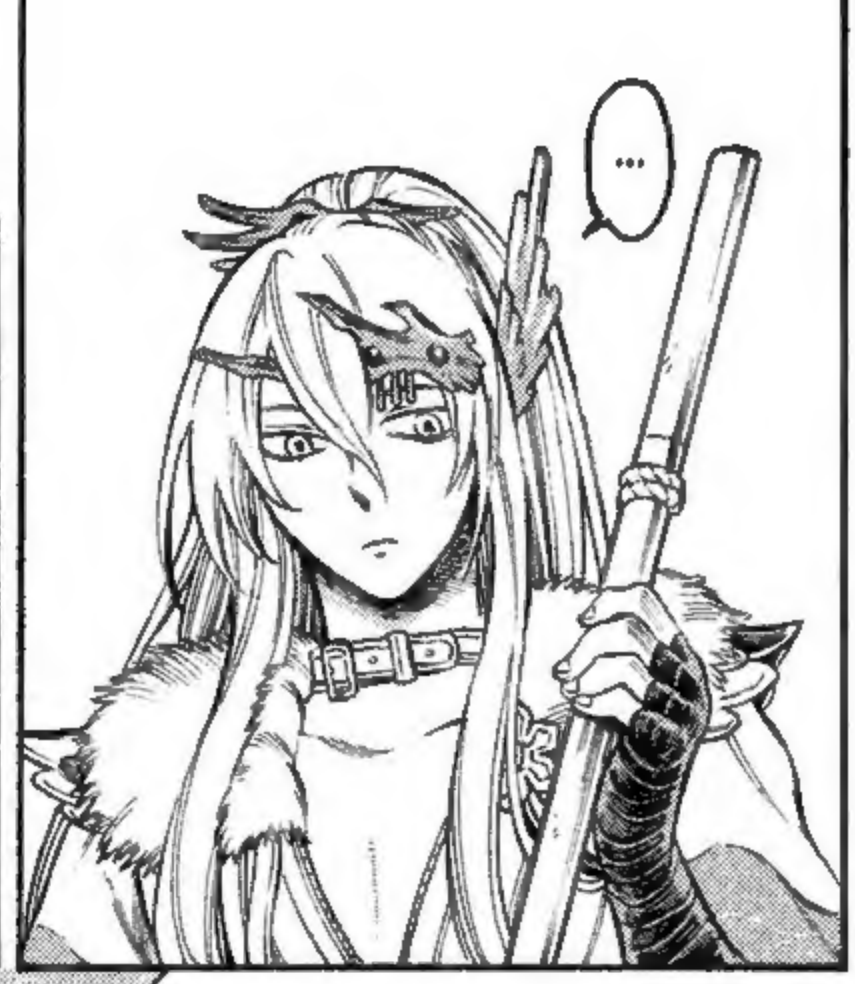
ゴゴゴ

I'LL HAVE TO RETURN THESE TO TAN HI AND SHO FU KAN SOMEHOW.

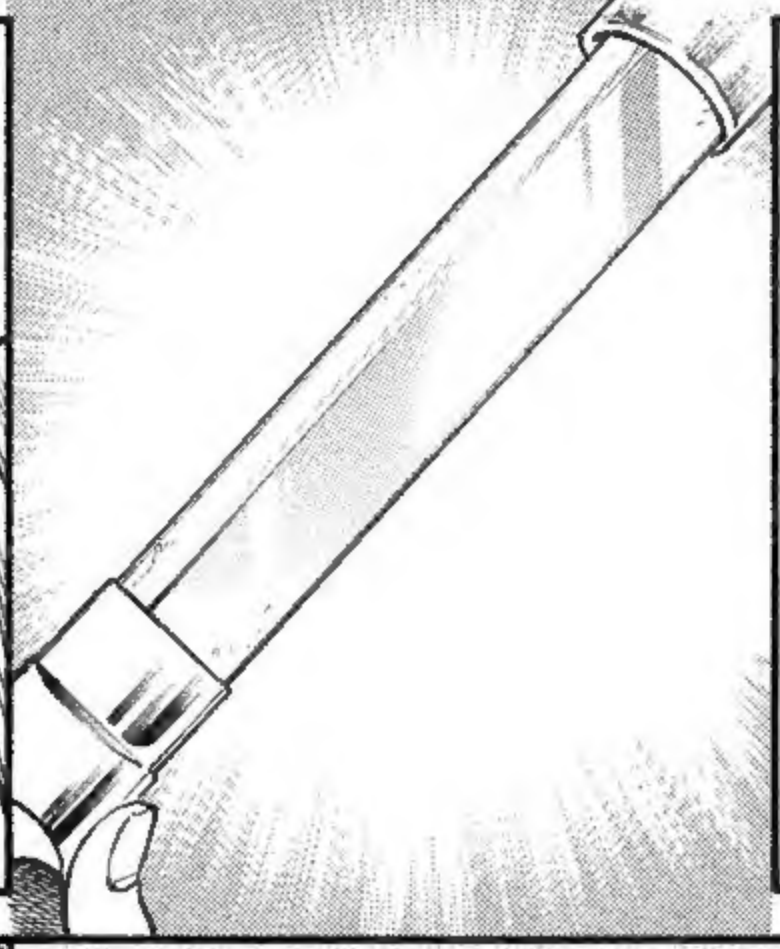
ゴゴゴ…

WHEN I PASSED BY THEY HAD BEEN THROWN THERE AS IF THEY WERE FORGOTTEN ABOUT.

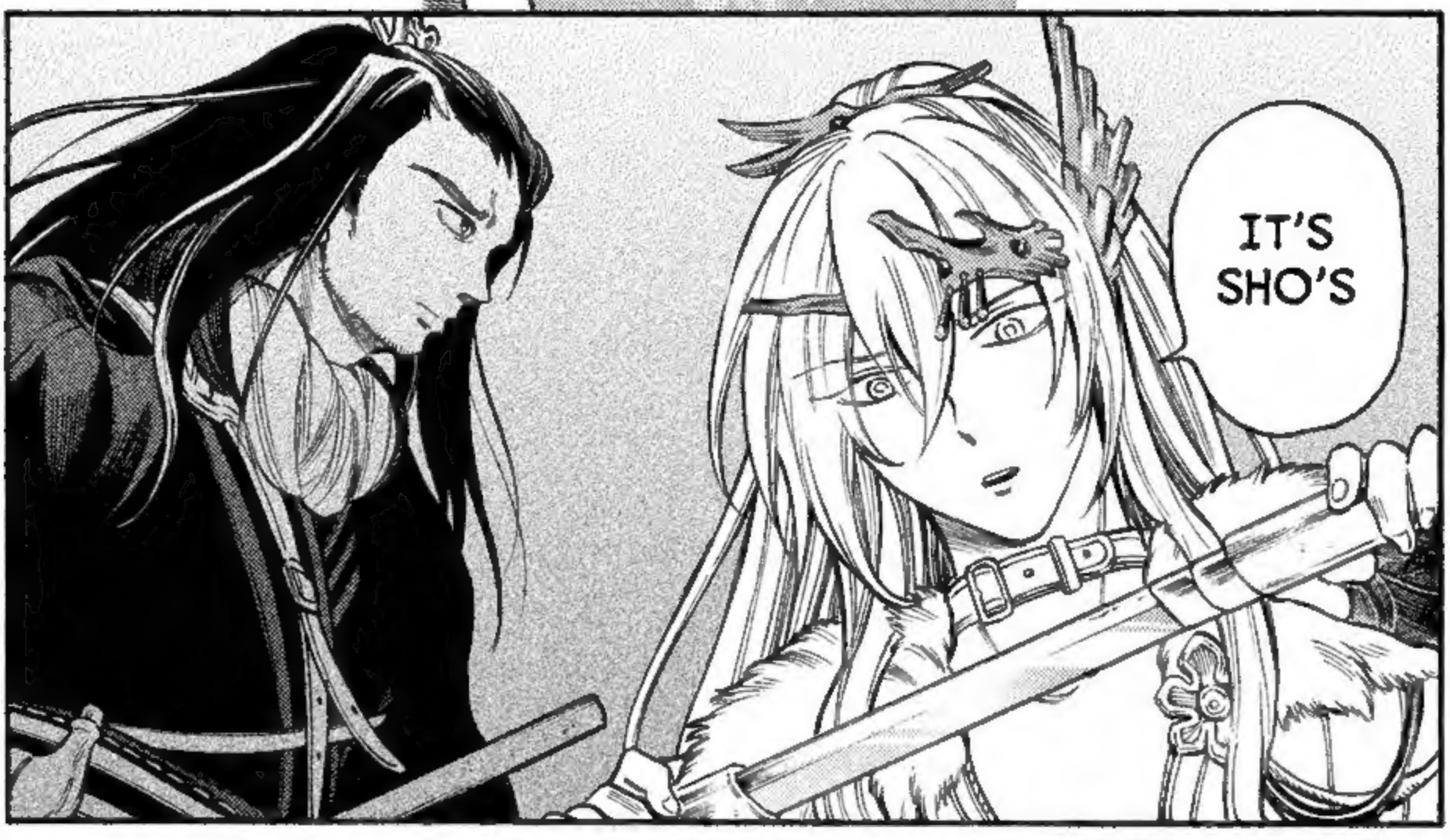


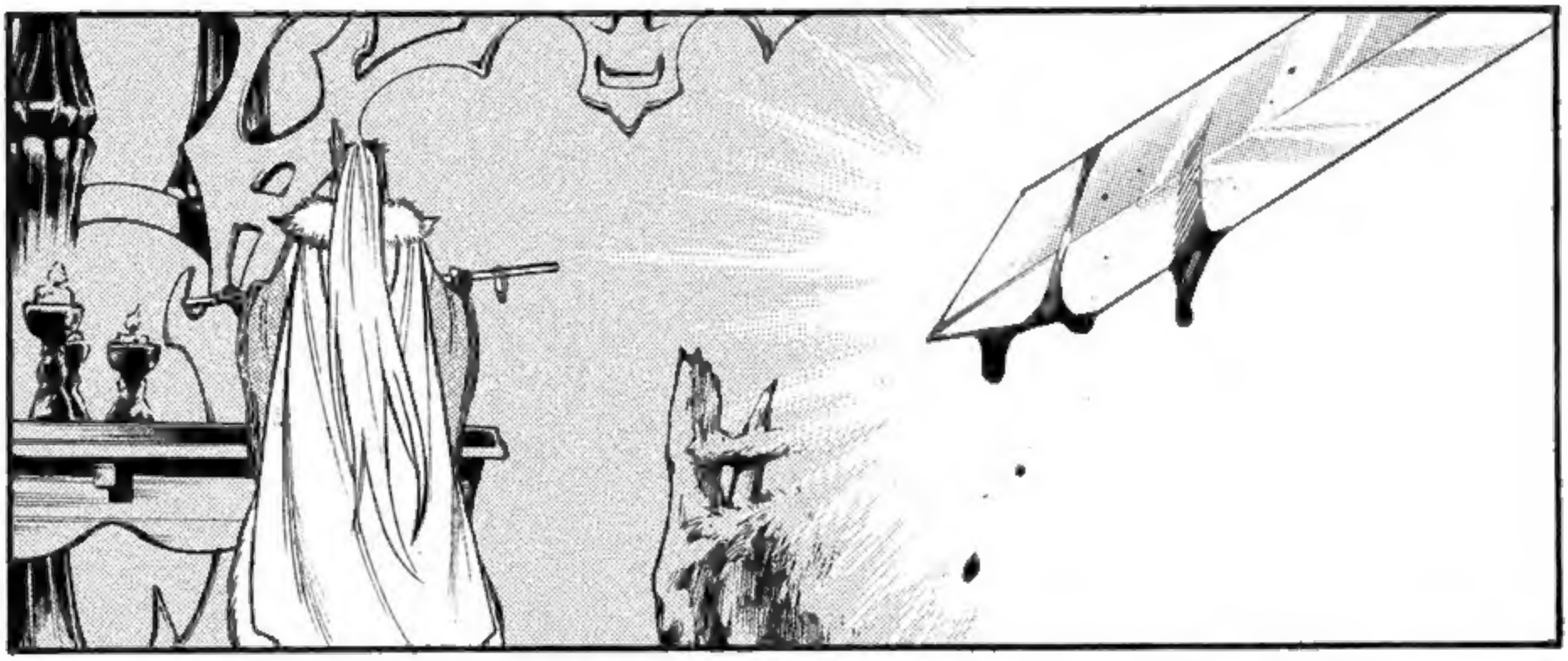

...

THIS IS...



HMM ...


IT'S SHO'S



END OF CHAPTER 23